

## THE CRITIC AS ARTIST

39

of Perdita, and in their dew-drenched chalices cool  
 your brow, and let their loveliness heal and restore your fevered  
 soul; or wake  
 from his forgotten tomb the sweet Syrian,  
 Meleager, and bid  
 the lover of Heiiodore make you music, for he too  
 has flowers  
 in his song, red pomegranate blossoms, and irises  
 that smell of  
 myrrh, ringed daffodils and dark blue hyacinths,  
 and marjoram  
 and crinkled ox-eyes. Dear to him was the  
 perfume of the  
 bean-field at evening, and dear to him the odorous  
 eared-spike-  
 nard that grew on the Syrian hills, and the fresh  
 green thyme,  
 the wine-cup's charm. The feet of his love as she  
 walked in  
 the garden were like lilies set upon lilies. Softer  
 than sleep-  
 laden poppy petals were her lips, softer than  
 violets and as  
 scented. The flame-like crocus sprang from the  
 grass to look  
 at her. For her the slim narcissus stored the  
 cool rain; and  
 for her the anemones forgot the Sicilian winds  
 that wooed  
 them. And neither crocus, nor anemone, nor  
 narcissus was  
 as fair as she was.

It is a strange thing, this transference of  
 emotion. We  
 sicken with the same maladies as the poets, and  
 the singer  
 lends us his pain. Dead lips have their message  
 for us, and  
 hearts that have fallen to dust can  
 communicate their joy.  
 We run to kiss the bleeding mouth of Fantine, and  
 we follow  
 Manon Lescaut over the whole world. Ours is the  
 love-mad-  
 ness of the Tyrian, and the terror of Orestes is  
 ours also. There  
 is no passion that we cannot feel, no pleasure that  
 we may not  
 gratify, and we can choose the time of our  
 initiation and the  
 time of our freedom also. Life! Life! Don't let us  
 go to life  
 for our fulfilment or our experience. It is a  
 thing narrowed  
 by circumstances, incoherent in its utterance,  
 and without that  
 fine correspondence of form and spirit which is  
 the only thing  
 that can satisfy the artistic and critical  
 temperament. It  
 makes us pay too high a price for its wares, and  
 we purchase  
 the meanest of its secrets at a cost that is  
 monstrous and infinite.

*Ernest.* Must we go, then, to Art for  
 everything?

*Gilbert.* For everything. Because Art does not  
 hurt us. The  
 tears that we shed at a play are a type of the  
 exquisite sterile  
 emotions that it is the function of Art to  
 awaken. We weep,  
 but we are not wounded. We grieve, but our  
 grief is not  
 bitter. In the actual life of man, sorrow, as  
 Spinoza says  
 somewhere, is a passage to a lesser perfection.  
 But the sorrow  
 with which Art fills us both purifies and

initiates, if I may  
quote once more from the great art-critic of the  
Greeks, It is  
through Art, and through Art only, that we can  
realize out